

# Hayward Police Recruit Pair Gains Top Honors

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HAYWARD — Two Hayward police recruits won top honors during the 37th academy of the Basic Police Officers' Training program sponsored by Chabot College and the Alameda County Sheriff's Department.

Officer James Trimble, 26, scored a 91.3 per cent grade point to place him at the top rank in his 30-member class.

Another Hayward officer, Kenneth Gross, 24, fired a perfect 300 score during the academy qualification day pistol shoot. Gross is the fourth officer to achieve a flawless score since the academy began in 1956.

Trimble, graduated last June from California State University at Los Angeles, was a police assistant with the Downey Police Department prior to his August 21, 1972, appointment to the Hayward department.

Chief Claude Marchand commended the two young officers for their top honor achievements during recent ceremonies.

Gross, who first gained pistol experience as a Hayward Police Reserve member, joined the police force Nov. 1, 1971, and was assigned to the Fall academy class with Trimble. Gross also is preparing to become a member of the Hay-

ward Police Department pistol team in statewide competition.

Both officers are married and each has two small children.

Other agencies represented in the 37th academy sessions included Alameda and Newark police departments, California State University, Hayward, and the Alameda County Sheriff's Department.

Training programs covered basic police techniques, laws of arrest, criminal law and gathering of criminal evidence. Graduates receive 11 quarter units of credit from Chabot College in administration of justice.

# Frustrated police strain sea of data in Garecht case

By Paul Grabowicz  
The Tribune

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Gross, Ken

**L**AL: Those three neatly printed letters haunt the pages of dozens of crime reports piled around FBI Agent Larry Taylor's desk.

LALs — lookalikes — have been Taylor's life for the last five months, since he began searching for the ruddy-faced, blond man who snatched 10-year-old Michaela Garecht from a Hayward supermarket parking lot last Nov. 19.

Authorities still don't know who

the man is or what has happened to Michaela, despite national distribution of a composite sketch of the suspect that has prompted more than 8,000 calls to the Hayward Police Department, most of them from tipsters who saw someone who looked like the drawing.

In the last few months, the case has faded from newspaper headlines and television broadcasts, and the number of calls to the kidnapping command post at the police department has dwindled from several hundred a day to 20 or so.

But each morning, Taylor and

Hayward Detective Ken Gross, the two lead investigators on the case, swallow their months of frustration and doggedly sift through the tips that come in.

At the command post area, the "screaming zoo" scene that Taylor says characterized the early days of the case has given way to a new phase in the investigation — the painstaking review of the thousands of existing leads to see if somewhere in the file cabinets and computer entries lies the key to solving the kidnapping.

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# Kidnap

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"It's a matter of reviewing little things to see if they tie together," said Taylor, 47, who has been with the FBI for 18 years.

"I'm constantly developing scenarios. You put things together like a puzzle. Does it fit? Should we have done more? The big thing you go home with is, 'Did I do enough? Did I do it right?'"

"We're going to see if there's something there that could lead us in a different direction than where we originally went," said Gross, 40, a 17-year veteran of the Hayward force.

Asked what he hoped to find, Gross replied, "I don't know. I'm hoping it's going to jump out at us."

"You always have this horrible thought that somewhere in that stack of reports is the answer," said R.C. Baker, a supervisor at the FBI's Oakland office and Taylor's boss. "We don't know for sure that we haven't talked to and interviewed the subject, and that drives you crazy."

Taylor and Gross are checking and rechecking the thousands of bits of information they've accumulated on the case and have returned to the scene of the abduction to see if there is some clue that might have been overlooked.

A half-dozen other investigators remain available to work on the case, and two volunteers still man the command center phone bank, taking calls from tipsters. Taylor also regularly taps FBI offices across the country and overseas to have agents check out new leads.

Much of the information that has been gathered in the case, such as the names of possible suspects, descriptions of cars similar to the one the abductor used and details on other kidnapping cases, has been stored in computers. That allows the investigators to detect patterns or connections in the mass of data and to quickly discount tips about suspects or cars that already have been checked and cleared.

*'You get a good tip and that will get you up really high, and then you drop down and each time you drop a little further.'*

— Detective Ken Gross

Taylor and other investigators also are poring over aerial photographs taken shortly after the kidnapping, to see if there is something at the crime scene that investigators missed when they first reviewed the pictures.

Gross and his boss, Hayward police Capt. Charles Breazeale, said they even are considering talking to psychics who have called about the case. "Our fear is someone claiming to be a psychic may actually know something," Breazeale said.

"We meet every morning and discuss what we'd done the day before, go over any new leads or suspicions," Taylor said. "We go over our wildest thoughts and speculations."

And each night, when the in-

vestigators leave their files and paperwork behind in the office, the case remains with them.

"It may leave your mind for a second," Gross said, "... and then I see my 10-year-old (son) and it all comes back."

"There are times when I'll (be at home) and suddenly I'll wake up and say, 'God,' and I'll run around and write something down on my note pad," said Taylor, who also is married with a son.

The difficulties the case poses for the investigators are formidable.

There is no physical evidence

from the scene of the abduction and only a vague description of the tan, older American car in which the suspect drove away.

No evidence has surfaced to link Michaela's disappearance to other child abductions, and the kidnapper's motive remains unknown.

"You don't know what you're dealing with," Taylor said. "It would be a lot easier if we did."

The best lead they have is the composite drawing of the suspect. But, as Taylor said, "You would be amazed at how many people look like the composite."

There's so little to go on that if this was a lesser crime, the investigation probably would have been abandoned by now, said Breazeale.

A gnawing sense of dejection also has set in, as one promising lead after another has dissolved into a dead end.

"You get (a good tip) and that will get you up really high," Gross said, "and then you drop down. And each time you drop a little further."

But Gross and Taylor say they also feel fortunate, because in most child disappearances, including several other recent ones in the Bay Area, investigators have even less to work with than in the Michaela case.

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"This is the one that the other cases will look at," Taylor said. "We're one of the few where we've got a witness (to the kidnapping)."

"It seems like we just started this yesterday and its been five months already," Gross said, reflecting back on the investigation. "It's incredibly frustrating. You don't feel like you've accomplished anything. Your accomplishment is the paper you get through on a daily basis."

Nonetheless, both Gross and Taylor remain determined to find Michaela and her abductor and say the investigation is far from over.

"I'll be doing this for a long time," Gross said, "unless we get a handle on this real quick."

For Taylor, there's a special motive for finding the kidnaper.

"Ten years ago I worked on a case like this in Las Vegas where we never found the victim," he said. "You always wonder what happened."

"It takes hard work and luck (to solve a case), and I think you make your own luck if you work at it," Taylor said.

"It's our turn."

# Hayward

SAT MAY 29 1993

# cop shot by teen improves

■ Officer able to speak with family, but still in serious condition

**Craig Anderson** *CH*

STAFF WRITER

Hayward police Sgt. Ken Gross was alert Friday and able to speak to his family less than two days after being shot twice by a teenage assailant during a traffic stop.

Gross is still listed in serious condition after undergoing two operations because of his gunshot wounds, but Eden Hospital spokeswoman Cassandra Phelps said the officer is showing strong improvement.

"He's doing quite well," Phelps said. "He's alert and able to talk." Investigators did not release much new information about the Wednesday night shooting, which began when Gross pulled over a red Camaro that was speeding down Whitman Street.

As Gross approached the driver's window, he was hit by a shotgun blast, which pierced his bulletproof vest and knocked him to the ground. The motorist, identified as 16-year-old James Cowling of Union City, got out of the car and fired a second shot into his back, police said.

Early Thursday morning, the youth was shot and killed by police after running to a nearby apartment complex on Silva Avenue, shooting two officers who tried to apprehend him and firing at others from a balcony.

Investigators did not speak with Gross about the incident, saying they want to allow him to regain his strength.

"We're waiting," said Lt. Charley Heitz. "He's been through

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# Cops recovering

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quite a bit."

The condition of the other hospitalized officer, David Helm, was upgraded from fair to good, Phelps said.

Officers Helm and Robert Lampkin were both shot at the apartment complex after kicking down the door to the apartment where the youth was hiding. Lampkin suffered a leg wound and was released Thursday.

Heitz said investigators have learned the name of the registered owner of the Camaro, but do not know if he is connected to James Cowling. "It was a car that was loaned and borrowed," he said.

Authorities believe James was the only person in the Camaro when it was pulled over, but have not ruled out the possibility that other people were in the car.

Heitz said investigators have not learned how the youth entered Apartment 72, saying only that it had been rented by a woman.

James's family criticized police Friday for waiting more than four hours after shooting him on the balcony. Officers rushed in shortly before 5 a.m. to find the youth dead in the balcony doorway.

"They let him lie up there for five hours without any attention," said Victoria Perryman, the youth's aunt. "They let him bleed to death."

Heitz strongly defended the police tactical unit, noting that two officers already had been shot trying to enter the apartment and that officers were uncertain if another person was in the room.

"The assumption was that there were more hostile folks inside," Heitz said. "What if we had met three more armed desperados?"

Heitz confirmed that officers found a 12-gauge shotgun, a 9mm semiautomatic weapon, and a significant amount of packaged cocaine inside the apartment, not far from James's body.

# A good cop in the wrong kind of spotlight

FRI MAY 28 1993

DETECTIVE Puts His Heart Into Kayla's Case—Headline, 1988.

At about 1 a.m. Thursday, trauma surgeon Dr. Jun Fu Chang of Eden Hospital Medical Center in Castro Valley began operating to remove shotgun pellets from the chest of that detective.

Chang and his team worked until nearly dawn on Ken Gross, 45, a 21-year veteran of the Hayward police force, a husband and father of three.

Readers might well remember the name.

In 1988, Gross began spearheading the search for the 9-year-old Michaela Garecht, the largest and most intense investigation ever handled by Hayward police.

The hunt put Gross in the spotlight. One story recounted how he had spent 10, 13- and then 16-hour-days sifting through tips and scraps of information in an effort to piece together an impossible puzzle. It described his office down to his coffee pot and the butcher paper on the wall listing possible suspects. It talked about the daily psychic toll of looking for a sweet kid who vanished from her parents' lives one Saturday in 1988.

"Everybody up here has kids," Gross told a reporter at the station. "It makes you keep going a little longer."

"He was always there if I had other problems," Michaela's



TOM GOFF

mother, Sharon Nemeth, said Thursday. "He was always available to talk about the things going on in the aftermath."

**I** think this case just broke Ken Gross's heart," said our reporter Dennis Olivera, who followed the investigation from the outset. "He basically went into the case because he was the first person they found on that Saturday. He had never worked a kidnapping before, and the community wanted that case solved. He spent Christmas Eve the first year investigating a bogus tip. I talked to him a year after the case started and he said he felt so close to that girl that he almost felt she was his daughter."

In the summer of 1991, Gross was promoted to sergeant in the department's patrol division and turned over the Garecht case to another detective. Gross went back into uniform and assumed the duties that came with the promotion. They included making routine street patrols, which ex-

plains why a former detective and kidnapping investigator would be trying to pull over a speeding red Camaro on Alves Street Wednesday night at 11:25.

Shortly after 9 Thursday morning, Chang operated on Gross again, this time to remove a kidney perforated by a pellet. Late Thursday afternoon, the patient was back in Eden's intensive care unit, conscious and feeling pain.

**D**OWNSTAIRS, the hospital lobby had been thick all day long with cops who had come to inquire about Gross and a fellow officer who had been shot in the hip by Gross's assailant during the later standoff.

"Ken is just one of those great guys. He's a cop's cop," explained Ray Alsdorf in Oakland. Alsdorf is a former Hayward policeman now with the Alameda County District Attorney's Office. "Everybody likes him and respects him. Just a good human being."

At last check, nurses were watching Gross for adverse developments. Respiratory infection was high on the list. And in another part of the hospital, the Eden trauma center staff was bracing for another adverse development — Memorial Day weekend. "It's the most hellish weekend of the year in trauma," said hospital spokeswoman Cassandra Phelps. "The call is going out to donate blood."

Gross had required an unspecified amount in surgery. And in surviving every cops' nightmare, he had lost some on the street.